SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelicalism (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod 19:5-6; John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 12:47; Rom. 5:18; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 3:4; Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The two covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)! The NT gospel, not Israel, is the key to Scripture (see SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW COVENANT OVER THE MOSAIC COVENANT).

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture. I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is my scripturally-informed presupposition.

The focus of Genesis 1-2 is YHWH creating a place where He and His highest creation, mankind, can fellowship (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:8). Physical creation is a stage for this interpersonal divine agenda.

1. St. Augustine characterized it as a divine-shaped hole in every person that can be filled only by God Himself.
2. C. S. Lewis called this planet "the touched planet," (i.e., prepared by God for humans).

The OT has many hints of this divine agenda.

1. Genesis 3:15 is the first promise that YHWH will not leave mankind in the terrible mess of sin and rebellion. It does not refer to Israel because there is no Israel, or covenant people, until the call of Abraham in Genesis 12.
2. Genesis 12:1-3 is YHWH's initial call and revelation to Abraham which will become the covenant people, Israel. But even in this initial call, God had an eye to the whole world. Notice Gen. 12:3!
3. In Exodus 20 (Deuteronomy 5) YHWH gave His law to Moses to guide His special people. Notice that in Exod. 19:5-6, YHWH reveals to Moses the unique relationship Israel will have. But also notice that they were chosen, like Abraham, to bless the world (cf. Exod. 19:5, "for all the earth is Mine"). Israel was to be a mechanism for the nations to know YHWH and be attracted to Him. Tragically they failed (cf. Ezek. 36:22-36).
4. In the Psalms – 22:27-28; 66:4; 86:9 (Rev. 15:4)
5. Through the prophets YHWH continued to reveal His universal redemptive plans.
    a. Isaiah – 2:2-4; 12:4-5; 25:6-9; 42:6,10-12; 45:22; 49:5-6; 51:4-5; 56:6-8; 60:1-3; 66:18,23
    b. Jeremiah – 3:17; 4:2; 16:19
    c. Micah 4:1-3
    d. Malachi 1:11

This universal emphasis is facilitated by the emergence of the "new covenant" (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; described in Ezek. 36:22-36), (see SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT) which focuses on the mercy of YHWH (see SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD [OT]), not the performance of fallen humans (see SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FALL OF MANKIND). Believing mankind is given is a "new heart," a "new mind," and a "new spirit." Obedience is crucial but it is an internal motivation, not an external code only (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; see SPECIAL TOPIC: KEEP).

The NT clearly reinforces the universal redemptive plan in several ways.

1. The Great Commission – Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8
2. God's has an eternal plan (i.e., predestined) – Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29
3. God wants all humans to be saved – John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 12:47; Acts 10:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 3:4; Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14
4. Christ unites the OT and NT – Gal. 3:28-29; Eph. 2:11-3:13; Col. 3:11. All human barriers and distinctions are removed in Christ. Jesus is the "mystery of God," once hidden but now clearly revealed (Eph. 2:11-3:13).

The NT focuses on Jesus, not Israel. The gospel, not a nationality or geographical region, is central. Israel was the first revelation (cf. Matt. 5:17-19) but Jesus is the ultimate, final revelation (cf. Matt. 5:21-48; John 1:14-18; 14:8-11; Heb. 1:1-3).

I hope you will take a moment to read the following Special Topics:

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY DO OT COVENANT PROMISE SEEM SDO DIFFERENT FROM NT COVENANT PROMISES?

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE GOSPEL

SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE, OR TRUST

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "RECEIVE," "BELIEVE," "CONFESS/PROFESS," "CALL UPON"?

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

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